

News Release



Department of the Interior
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Mid-Columbia River National Wildlife Refuge Complex
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Prescribed Fire Planned for the Mid-Columbia River National Wildlife Refuges.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service officials are making their annual plans for prescribed fires within the Mid-Columbia River National Wildlife Refuge Complex. These planned fires accomplish refuge management objectives for reducing fire hazards and enhancing wildlife habitat.

Hazardous areas are burned to reduce the amounts of highly flammable, decadent vegetation. Hazardous fuels treatments make fire suppression activities safer for personnel by reducing heavy concentrations of fuels from potential problem areas.

“Prescribed burning is a very important tool for land managers to enhance the quality of the habitat”, stated Chris Schulte, Fire Management Officer. Habitat enhancement burning targets the removal of undesired and overly crowded vegetation which interferes with utilization of the habitat by native wildlife. Removing and/or opening the vegetation with prescribed fire also increases the success of efforts to eradicate invasive species.

Prescribed fire activities include everything from burning small piles of invasive trees removed by hand crews or heavy equipment, to broadcast fires across hundreds of acres of land. All forms of treatment involve their own set of risks and concerns.

Refuge managers limit burning to the late winter months or fall because of the potential for detrimental impacts to migratory nesting birds in late spring and the danger of wildfires in summer and early fall.

Prescribed fires on the refuges are of short duration, but smoke management is always a concern. In the past two years, over 500 acres of fuels have been eliminated under a biomass recovery contract which does not generate any smoke while still accomplishing the objectives of the land managers. When we do burn, it is only when conditions are favorable for smoke ventilation, and we are careful to comply with all local regulations.

– FWS –

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